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When, on New Year's Day 1952, Sir John Ferguson, the eminent bibliographer and Industrial Commission judge, wrote to his friend and colleague, M.H. Ellis, the anticommunist historian, he evinced sentiments with which many labour historians would agree. Ferguson knew of Ellis's practice of collecting left-wing literature, especially pamphlets published by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Ferguson was concerned that these should be preserved, perhaps, he suggested, as part of his large collection of Australiana lodged at the National Library of Australia. If Ellis acceded to this request, Ferguson advised, future students of 'sociology' would have access to a 'large body of material covering every period which may touch his thesis, e.g. the I.W.W. campaign...in N.S.W. was Lang right'.<sup>1</sup> No doubt influenced by ongoing displays of personal regard from H.L. White, the National Librarian, Ellis's pamphlets did end up in Canberra, though not as part of the broader Ferguson collection, but as a holding in their own right.<sup>2</sup> M.H. Ellis was rarely inclined to share the limelight.

One purpose of the present paper is to review Ellis's collection of pamphlets. The basis of two major polemical texts, *The Red Road* (1932) and *The Garden Path* (1949) and a significant resource known to the distinguished bibliographer of Australian communism, Beverley Symons<sup>3</sup>, the Ellis collection remains rarely consulted by scholars of Australian labour history. In part this may reflect Ellis's enduring reputation as a hidebound reactionary, such that it may seem curious to mention Malcolm Ellis and Australian labour history in the same sentence. As a scholar, Ellis is better remembered for his pioneering biographies of figures associated with the early colonial period in Australia's history.<sup>4</sup> As a Cold War warrior, the redbaiting 'Ek Dum' of the *Sydney Bulletin*, Ellis was not backward in denouncing the leftist sympathies of various Australian labour historians. Brian Fitzpatrick's *The Australian Commonwealth*, Ellis characterised as 'no more than an adroit pamphlet which conforms to the line of the Party Politbureau'.<sup>5</sup> More than likely Ellis had Robin Gollan in mind when he hinted that the editorial board of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* harboured 'communist interests'.<sup>6</sup> Thus it is hardly surprising that Australia's pioneer labour historians remember Malcolm Ellis in less than affectionate terms. With uncharacteristic acerbity, E.C. Fry recalls Ellis as 'one of nature's fascists'.<sup>7</sup>

Politics notwithstanding, Ellis's reputation at the 1949 Victorian royal commission as the 'historical expert' of Australian communism was not undeserved.<sup>8</sup> Though vehemently opposed to both the industrial and political wings of the labour movement, Ellis's polemical writings were usually quite sound in terms of empirical detail. As both an historian and ideologue, Ellis was invariably partisan but rarely guilty of sloppy research. Clearly his interpretation of evidence was often far-fetched and his language over-wrought. Yet recent scholarship has shown his account of Comintern manipulation of the CPA, for instance, to be broadly accurate.<sup>9</sup>

Here, it will be argued that Ellis's method of gathering data sheds light on suggestions that he was a long-term police spy and employee of the intelligence services. Initially, however, it is important to examine the forces at work in the making of one of Australia's more significant Cold War warriors. As Ken Buckley argued

in 1984 it is important for left historians to understand their enemy.<sup>10</sup>

## The making of an anticommunist

Considering how comfortably - in middle life - M.H. Ellis fitted into the plush clubs and institutions of Sydney's elite - given the depth of the veteran journalist's network into the commanding heights of Canberra's conservative political circles, some aspects of his background are incongruous. The circumstances of his birth and upbringing were plebeian. While Ellis's father was the product of an ancient Norman Irish family, when Ellis was born, Thomas Ellis was a farm labourer and battling small selector in Queensland. In outback Queensland during the 1890s, Ellis's childhood playmates were mainly Aboriginal. His was a rough and tumble frontier childhood, deprived of any significant material comfort by the family's peripatetic life-style. As the great industrial battles of the 1890s raged around his juvenile world, this was the kind of egalitarian upbringing that could have inclined him towards a broad sympathy with the labour movement.<sup>11</sup>

The influences of a private school education<sup>12</sup> and a mother of robust Tory temperament<sup>13</sup> shortfused this possibility. Instead Malcolm Ellis's political trajectory was towards ardent imperial patriotism, a position strengthened by the events of World War One. Appointed as private secretary to the Queensland Opposition leader, Sir Edward Macartney, Ellis needed little encouragement to find deplorable Premier T.J. Ryan and his experiments in state socialism. In 1918 Ellis prepared a 572 page manuscript he styled the 'bible'. Detailing the 'Disloyal Actions of the Queensland Labor Party and its adherents', this was published in distilled form as *A Handbook for Nationalists*.<sup>14</sup> In 1919 the pitched battles which took place in south Brisbane accompanying the Red Flag riots added further force to Ellis's fear of mob rule, in his view the inevitable corollary of Labor in office. On oath Ellis claimed that the Russians taking part in the 24 March 1919 procession were foaming at the mouth as they waved their red flags.<sup>15</sup>

For conservatives like Malcolm Ellis, the defining event of the war had been the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The prospect of the masses rising, of emulating Lenin's Bolsheviks, soured all thought of a future Australia. Ellis threw himself into the counterrevolutionary initiatives of 1919-1920 with gusto. The Queensland representative on the largely still-borne Commonwealth Directorate of War Propaganda, Ellis also acted as an emissary for the Melbourne industrialist, Herbert Brookes. His detailed reports to Brookes on the 'enemy in our midst' included the intelligence that, in an attempt to curry favour with the state's public servants, E.G. Theodore had distributed £1000, 000 in surreptitious salary increases in the three weeks before the Queensland elections.<sup>16</sup>

Relocating to Sydney, Ellis worked for the *Daily Telegraph* between 1923 and 1927, seeing himself as embarked upon a crusade against the forces of darkness. Predictably hostile to militant trade unions during the great industrial disputes of the 1920s,<sup>17</sup> he was equally opposed to the Australian Labor Party (ALP), which, because of the 1921 socialisation objective, Ellis saw as formally declared in the communist camp. Working in private practice as 'M.H. Ellis Literary Services'<sup>18</sup> and using funds provided by the

Sydney solicitor E.T. Simpson<sup>19</sup>, in 1932 Ellis published *The Red Road. The Story of the Capture of the Lang Party by Communists instructed from Moscow*. As its sub-title suggests, Ellis denounced J.T. Lang as a flunkey of the Communist Party, seduced in particular by J.S. Garden and 'Gardenism'. By a 'monstrous' plan foreign to British thought, a 'reversion from the civilised belief of the rightness of right to the barbaric of one of the rightness of power'. Moscow had manipulated Lang Labor such that 'stark Bolshevism' was the result.

In large part these themes were revisited in *The Garden Path*, published seventeen years later with funding from senior Liberal Party cadres<sup>20</sup>. 'Jock' Garden again had pride of place in creating a 'sorry fix' whereby the ALP had become captive to Moscow, though the rogue's gallery was supplemented by Dr H.V. Evatt, and Dr Lloyd Ross, 'Lenin's missionary' of the Australian Railways Union. In common with other works of its genre Ellis was adamant that when communists left the party this was a subterfuge to throw the less diligent off the scent. Ellis believed that Australia would not be safe until 'the last green snake is strangled with the guts of the last red dingo'.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the Cold War Malcolm Ellis remained a strident ideologue, denouncing the Left and the trade unions in numerous *Bulletin* diatribes.<sup>22</sup> On the fringes of the Australian Congress for Cultural Freedom, he used *Quadrant* to launch his diatribe against the scholarship of H.V. Evatt's *Rum Rebellion*.<sup>23</sup> Ellis's biographies of figures associated with the early colonial history of Australia were also used as weapons in the Cold War.<sup>24</sup> His attacks on the 'crypto-communist' Manning Clark took the battle against leftism into the corridors of academe.<sup>25</sup> Enjoying extensive contacts in the conservative political establishment from R.G. Menzies and R.G. Casey, to business leaders, bankers, newspaper proprietors, judges, governors, archbishops, judges, generals and admirals, his was the kind of inside political camaraderie which provided the social cement for Australian anti-communism. With A.G. Cameron, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ellis enjoyed an especially extensive correspondence. Such blokey concerns as avoiding contracting venereal disease, Cameron's puerile campaign of social ostracism against Governor General W.J. McKell, and the defects of that 'long, black Irish B\_\_\_D', (J.B. Chifley) and the 'mad or bad or both' Dr H.V. Evatt, were discussed at length.<sup>26</sup>

Always more than a wordsmith, Ellis was a key player in various Cold War campaigns. Between 1947 and 1949 Ellis was part of a four-man propaganda committee appointed by the banks to defeat the Chifley government's plans to nationalise the private trading banks. He advised R.R. McKellar of the Bank of New South Wales to disguise expenditure by diverting funds into right-wing groups like the People's Union of New South Wales. Thus the campaign would appear a 'people's fight', rather than 'a fight between the banks and the Labour Party'.<sup>27</sup>

The zenith of Ellis's public career as an anti-communist came in 1949 with the appointment of the Victorian royal commission into communism chaired by Mr Justice Lowe. Invited to attend as an expert witness following several discussions with Premier Holloway, Ellis proved a 'fairly solid, introductory witness' who presented a plethora of evidence to indict the CPA of 'treason' and inciting revolutionary violence. His evidence leant on his growing stature as an historian and the fact that he presented internal party documents which, he claimed, illustrated the origins and development of the CPA in a detached, unbiased way. This claim was, of course, disingenuous. Ellis interpreted the documents to assist prosecuting counsel, providing context when necessary. The CPA's counsel, Fred Paterson, was right when he argued that Ellis was 'insanely biased' against communism. Yet because the

'historical expert' had chosen to harness CPA records, he avoided any challenge to his credibility which the adversarial process of cross-examination might have entailed. As Vickie Rastrick argues, as an historian Ellis 'must have forgotten how interpretative the mere act of selection can be'. The documents Ellis presented showed the CPA in the worst possible light, glossing over periods when the party sought accommodation with reformist groups. Nor did Ellis's evidence unearth any fresh revelation about the CPA's involvement in alleged seditious plotting.<sup>28</sup>

Ellis's public role as an anticommunist made him few friends on the left. To *Tribune* he was frequently 'Dumb Hek', a reviled and sometimes ridiculed figure, long remembered for disparaging the prowess of the Red Army during World War Two.<sup>29</sup> In CPA circles there were suspicions that Ellis's anticommunism stemmed from an intimate acquaintance with the security services. The raunchy 'Document J' tendered before the Petrov Royal Commission alleged that Ellis 'is a police informer, and collects dossiers on Communists. He had contacts among fascist officers in the intelligence services, and was able to use the intelligence services for collection of information for his own dossiers'.<sup>30</sup> Leftist scuttlebutt further had it that Ellis was a close associate of Arnold von Skerst, the former Nazi, and was 'a bankrupt pervert whom even the Bank of New South Wales spewed up - it told him to take his account away'. Unsurprisingly, Malcolm Ellis denied these charges as the malevolent intrigues of his political opponents.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the depth and texture of Ellis's understanding of left-wing politics raises the distinct possibility that Ellis's anticommunist vigilance was more than an amateur association. Short of a pay slip from the Australian Intelligence and Security Organization (ASIO) or its antecedents, what do the archival sources reveal about Ellis's connections with the intelligence services?

### 'Captured' documents

In 1932 Inspector Roland Browne of the Melbourne office of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch inquired about the provenance of a new publication in his professional area of expertise. This was *The Red Road*, whose argument and shrillness Browne found 'most extraordinary'. Browne requested information about the author, and also inquired whether the book enjoyed any official standing. More than likely Browne's colleagues - Longfield Lloyd - in charge of the Sydney office and Major Harold Jones, director of the Branch in Canberra - did not share Browne's qualms or apparent ignorance of Ellis's identity. Browne was reassured that the work was 'a fair summary of Communist and associated activities over the past decade and seems to have required a good deal of research'. Ellis had 'made a study of Communism and has "Captured" (or kept as evidence) various publications'. *The Red Road* was 'a concise history of Communism in Australia...interesting enough, but as far as we are concerned, of no great importance'.<sup>32</sup>

Of course it may well be that this file does not reflect the full substance of Ellis's dealings with the security services. Yet the available evidence provides little suggestion of intimacy. Similarly, in 1949 the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) incorrectly believed that in order to purchase copies of *The Garden Path*, written authorisation from the author had to be procured.<sup>33</sup> Having gone to the trouble of producing his defining statement on the communist menace, it would have been a perverse author who introduced such an impediment to its wide circulation.

In the shadowy world of intelligence and security, inevitably many issues cannot be resolved. Yet it emerges that Ellis's first formal contact with the secret state- 'special service' as Ellis termed it- occurred in Queensland during World War One.<sup>34</sup> In

October 1917 Ellis was introduced to George Ainsworth of the Brisbane office of the Special Investigation Bureau, the wartime precursor to the Investigation Branch. Ainsworth recruited him to make a special report on 'disloyalty' and its connections with the Ryan Labor Government.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately produced for the Commonwealth Directorate of War Propaganda, the report was vintage Ellis paranoia. Grating at the fact that Ryan was rarely guilty of an overt act or profession of 'disloyalty', Ellis took solace in the many sinister inferences that could be derived from the company the premier had kept. Closely scrutinising the Queensland labour paper, the *Daily Standard*, taking detailed notes of the various 'vile speeches' he heard at public meetings, noting, too, the composition of the speakers' platform and audience, Ellis drew an alarming portrait of the 'conspiracy' which existed between the Queensland government, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Irish republicans, anti-conscriptionists and pacifists. Here were all the trademark signs of the intelligence agent, among them a reliance on innuendo and scuttlebutt, a tendency to employ conspiracy theory and an emphasis on guilt by association. Among its biographical appendices, was the observation that one anti-conscriptionist: 'looks a dangerous type of man. Has two illegitimate children by his wife before he married her. (I have seen birth certificates)'. Joseph Collings, Ellis reported, was 'a man of violent habits and language'. When Ellis had attended a strike committee meeting in 1912 as a journalist, Collings, it seems, had 'seriously urged that I should be held as hostage or shot'.<sup>36</sup>

Such melodrama, no doubt, was very much to the taste of Ellis's political masters who wished to be assured that members of the Left really were dangerous bounders against whom the most drastic action was warranted. Nonetheless, this does not seem to have ushered in a long career of direct involvement with the security services. Certainly in July 1954, during the course of the Petrov Royal Commission, Ellis passed on information personally to ASIO's New South Wales office.<sup>37</sup> But it remains unclear whether this was a regular occurrence. It is difficult to imagine that Ellis would have been called to act as an informer or agent in the field. More likely he would have been regarded as an honoured expert in the area of anticommunist intelligence. According to David McKnight *The Garden Path* was 'ASIO's Bible'.<sup>38</sup>

On the whole it seems likely, however, that the personal collection of some 750 left-wing pamphlets that so roused Sir John Ferguson's instincts for conservation in 1952, the so-called 'captured' documents, were the basis of Ellis's prodigious knowledge of Labor and socialist politics. Ironically the fecundity and frankness of the communist pamphleteers enabled Ellis to become a knowledgeable foe. Anonymous citizens in the suburbs sent cyclostyled circulars found in letter boxes, distributed at work places or at the Sydney Domain. Thus a 1944 leaflet, *Japan Says Vote No*, advocating the affirmative case in the 1944 'Powers' Referendum, had been 'Put into Killara letter boxes this morning 18/8/44'. A copy of *Corvette*, a newsletter distributed at Garden Island in 1946 was sent by an anonymous donor who complained: 'How does the Govt. allow this at the Headquarters of Navy?'.<sup>39</sup> Other professional anticommunists such as W.C. Wentworth MHR or A.M. Blain MHR also sent pamphlets. More often that not Malcolm Ellis wore out his own shoe leather inspecting the holdings of the many left-wing bookshops then dotted throughout the central business district of Sydney to purchase his own copies. A man of thorough habits, he recorded his purchase of the CPA's *Handbook for Tutors* at 11.10 a.m. on May 27, 1949 at the Communist Official Bookshop, Sydney.

By such elementary methods Ellis assembled a rich storehouse of material relating to Australian, Russian, United States, Canadian, British, Scottish and New Zealand

communism. Rare documents such as *The Diesel Motor*, a 1911 pamphlet, perhaps of IWW extraction and believed to be one of the first, militant working-class pamphlets ever distributed in Australia,<sup>40</sup> as well as W.Paul's *Hands off Russia* (1920) which, Ellis claimed, was the CPA's first pamphlet, are to be found in the National Library collection. So is another rare document, D.B. Copland's *The Origins of Bolshevism*, a 1920 pamphlet published by the Workers' Educational Association of Tasmania. With access to internal party documents like the 1928 *CPA Party Training Manual* or the 1946 pamphlet, *The Party Branch. Its Organisation and Leadership* at his disposal, Ellis needed little undercover sleuthing to increase his knowledge of the Australian communism's internal machinations. Many pamphlets were well thumbed and enthusiastically annotated. Inevitably Malcolm Ellis was a more diligent reader than many of the blue-collar proletarians who were intended to be readers.

As one might expect of a veteran journalist, Ellis boasted excellent, highly placed sources. Lieutenant-General Berryman, in charge of the Army's Eastern command 1946-54, sent strategic appreciations to Ellis.<sup>41</sup> In his official capacity as minister for external affairs, R.G. Casey, also provided Ellis with sensitive material on international communism, invariably instructing that their source could not be acknowledged.<sup>42</sup> Occasionally police documents found their way into Ellis's hands. These included detailed police reports concerning the 1942 arrest and case against Sydney Benjamin Hooper, the Australia First internee, a file which boosted Ellis's conviction that such 'puzzled patriots' had been the victims of a serious miscarriage of justice.<sup>43</sup> Ellis was also privy to the court transcript of proceedings against Horace Ratcliff, the 'communist ruffian' who, material in the Hooper file claimed, had been attempting to infiltrate Australia First as part of his brief 'to uncover un-Australian activities' for the CPA.<sup>44</sup>

Private correspondence with A.G. Cameron also assisted Ellis. A former Military Intelligence officer, Cameron shared Ellis's interest in the covert world of intelligence and security, maintaining a watching brief on the Petrov Affair from the outset. On the day of Prime Minister Menzies' announcement of Vladimir Petrov's defection Cameron wrote:

The devil is loose at last. I never saw the boys of the Left as silent as when R.G.M. was reading his statement. Bert was not there... It seems from chit-chat...the prize exhibits will be: 1. Certain civil servants. 2. Bert's staff. 3. Some Uni. People. 4. some trade union bosses.

Some Labor boys were loudly proclaiming that Pekoff (sic) would help rather than damage them. I doubt that they believed it. I certainly didn't.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time as forwarding a copy of Rupert Lockwood's 'Document J' to the Sydney journalist, Cameron confided that he held some reservations about the conduct of the Royal Commission into Espionage:

I have followed the Petrov Case. An ABC announcer on Friday night said the Comm. reminded him of an Army trying to fight its way out of its own barbed wire; after that he tore into them. I thought it a clear case of contempt. I do not like the way they are falling over backwards to conceal names...Windeyer seems to be a self made smoke screen to me. I always thought that all facts should be stated to a R. comm, and that it is their duty to report on what is fact and what is not. A copy of Lockwood's "Document J" is awaiting me in Adelaide...I'm not over-favourably impressed with the doings. I heard much better inside stuff myself during the Depression, especially on their attempts to infiltrate the Army.<sup>46</sup>

Historians interested in explaining the shortcomings of

the archival records relating to the Petrov Affair may well embrace Cameron's observation, in September 1954, that,

[i]t is a fair guess that if he (Dr Evatt) does assume power security had better get all its documents together and bury them in a deep hole in the Pacific, & that Spry & Co. had better seek sanctuary in Moscow-they wouldn't be safe there-the Foreign Legion would be better.<sup>47</sup>

It has been claimed that *The Garden Path* shaped some of the questioning at the Royal Commission.<sup>48</sup> Given Ellis's links with various old Petrovians this was hardly surprising. Victor Windeyer, ASIO's chief counsel was a long term personal friend and fellow amateur historian who agreed to conduct Ellis's case against elements with the Royal Australian Historical Society at the same time as conducting ASIO's brief at the Royal Commission.<sup>49</sup> Ellis also maintained correspondence with Mr Justice Philp, one of the three royal commissioners, about the conduct of the Royal Commission. In October 1955 Philp expressed pleasure in both Ellis's *Bulletin* articles on the royal commission's report and his recently published biography of John Macarthur. On the subject of communism the judge deferred to Ellis remarking: 'Of course with your knowledge of the Coms you will have seen implications in the evidence which would not be apparent to us, particularly in relation to matters other than espionage'. Ellis's *John Macarthur* and the judge's recent dealings with H.V. Evatt set Philp off on a search for a copy of 'Evatt's effort', *Rum Rebellion*.<sup>50</sup> Ellis also maintained ongoing correspondence with Major Arthur Birse, the translator engaged by the Royal Commission. In October 1955 Birse had returned to the Britain and was shepherding a Soviet delegation of builders and architects around factories. Birse was grateful to Ellis for providing him with the published extracts of Michael Bialoguski's memoirs, the 'instalments of my friend's story', and regarded Ellis's articles on the royal commission as guiding 'the public in the maze of ideas put out by many irresponsible people'.<sup>51</sup>

If his papers are any guide, M.H. Ellis was better connected in military than security circles. His contacts in the former included retired officers like Rear Admiral A.B. Doyle who had dabbled in right-wing enterprises such as the Old Guard in 1930-32, and the Call to the People of Australia in 1951.<sup>52</sup> In 1956 Doyle congratulated Ellis on his appointment as a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George. 'It is always a pleasure', Doyle wrote, 'when one's friends receive a well earned Honour'.<sup>53</sup> W.R. Hodgson, a former Military Intelligence officer attached to the post-war Australian mission in Japan expressed his enjoyment of Ellis's *The Garden Path* while regretting that it treated events between 1944 and 1949 'too sketchily'.<sup>54</sup> The former Military Intelligence chief and fellow journalist, J.M. Prentice, was not, on the available evidence, a regular correspondent, though his war-time letter transferring a member of the Australia First organisation to cyphers, found its way into the Ellis papers.<sup>55</sup> Clearly Ellis and Prentice, both journalists, both Cold War warriors, had much in common. In 1949, however, Prentice reported to members of the right-wing secret army, The Association, that Ellis had been a nervous and unimpressive witness at the Victorian royal commission into communism.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

In the battle against labour militancy and antipodean socialism Malcolm Ellis proved a worthy, untiring adversary. Whether he was, in fact, a long-term intelligence agent, is debatable. He was certainly an employee of the secret state in World War One and was acquainted with many agents. He also maintained biographical files on leftists and was by no means a stranger to ASIO's offices. More than likely, however, he enjoyed closer relations with senior

conservative politicians than with serving officers in ASIO. It seems probable that beyond the experience of World War One, 'private research', often funded by the Liberal Party or its antecedents, or his pay cheque from the *Bulletin*, facilitated Ellis's anticommunist activities and the publication of his polemical pamphlets and books. Rather than secret caches of documents, Ellis's personal library of pamphlets, pored over late at night at his home in Cremorne, informed his fulminations on the Red peril.

This is not to say that Ellis was backward in offering his services to the state. Following the 1949 elections, for instance, Ellis wrote to Menzies' newly installed minister for defence. E.H. Harrison replied: 'I appreciate your offer of assistance, particularly in the matter of communism, a subject on which I know from experience you are particularly well versed'.<sup>57</sup>

Harrison did not say whether he would accept Ellis's kind offer. Almost paradoxically, but perhaps precisely because Ellis was so well known as both a friend of the new government and a professional anticommunist, Ek Dum's assistance needed to be treated with circumspection. As far back as 1918-1919, Ellis's links with the Directorate of War Propaganda were suppressed, so that the organisation would not appear politically partisan.<sup>58</sup> In the interim Ek Dum's public profile had increased substantially. It was one thing for the Left to suspect Ellis of being a Commonwealth policeman; it was entirely different to risk official disclosure that a journalist closely connected to the ruling conservative party, was double dipping as a security agent. ASIO already had enough problems attempting to project an impression of neutrality rather than a political police working for the Liberal Party. Thus it had reason to keep overzealous amateurs like W.C. Wentworth or M.H. Ellis at arm's length.

Perhaps, too, at the time of ASIO's *floreat* in the Cold War, Malcolm Ellis had come to be regarded as something of a loose cannon. From the 1950s his fractious behaviour – revelling in disputes with the Pioneers' Club and various academic groups including the Royal Australian Historical Society and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* – suggest an increasingly unbalanced personality. Not only did Ellis enjoy the limelight and the glare of public controversy; his version of events was increasingly unreliable. In 1948, for instance, Ellis embarrassed 'Black Jack' Galleghan by misrepresenting remarks the former CIS officer and prisoner of war had made to him over lunch. Ellis claimed that Galleghan had told him to warn A.M. Blain from attacking H.V. Evatt in the House, or certain disclosures would be made about Blain's experience as a POW. When a minor public contretemps emerged about the allegation – fuelled by A.G. Cameron – Galleghan, who had moved on to lead the Australian Military Mission in Berlin, was mystified. Galleghan had certainly lunched with Ellis, 'a casual acquaintance'. Because, however, he knew Ellis to be an anti-government journalist, Callaghan claimed he would not have confided in him in any way.<sup>59</sup> More than likely ASIO entertained similar reservations.

## Endnotes

- 1 Sir J. Ferguson to M.H. Ellis, 1 January 1952, M.H. Ellis papers, Mitchell Library (ML) K21883.
- 2 These are accessible via the Petherick reading room of the National Library of Australia (NLA).
- 3 Beverley Symons with Andrew Wells and Stuart Macintyre, *Communism in Australia. A Resource Bibliography*, NLA, Canberra, 1994, p. 42.
- 4 M.H. Ellis, *Lachlan Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1947; Francis Greenway, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1948; *John Macarthur*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1955.

- 5 *Australian Quarterly Review*, vol. 1, no. 2, Autumn 1957.
- 6 Gerald Walsh, 'Recording the Australian Experience: Sir Keith Hancock and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*', paper presented at Sir Keith Hancock symposium, Australian National University (ANU), 1-3 April 1998, p.ix. For a copy of this paper I am grateful to Mr Walsh.
- 7 Personal interview, Dr E.C. Fry, Canberra, 19 July 1997.
- 8 Vickie Rastrick, 'The Victorian Royal Commission on Communism, 1949-50: A Study of Anti-Communism in Australia', MA thesis, Australian National University, 1973, pp. 128-132.
- 9 The literature on this subject is extensive. See, most recently, Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, chap. 7.
- 10 Ken Buckley, 'Why Work on Capital History?' in Drew Cottle (ed.) *Capital Essays*, General Studies Department, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1984.
- 11 Malcolm Ellis recalled the circumstances of his upbringing in an interview with Hazel de Berg, 7 November 1967. De Berg tapes, NLA, tape 331 side 1, transcript pp. 3980-3998; see also M.H. Ellis, 'When the Bush was Open', *The Bulletin Book. Selections from the 1960s*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1966, pp. 60-64.
- 12 Transcript of Ellis interview with De Berg, pp. 3999-4000.
- 13 See Constance Jane Ellis, *I Seek Adventure*, Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1981.
- 14 ML MSS 880; M.H. Ellis, *A Handbook for Nationalists. Containing Useful Information about Labour's Record in Office in Queensland*, National Political Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1918.
- 15 D.W. Rawson, 'Political Violence in Australia', *Dissent*, Autumn 1968, p. 20; see also Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots. A study of Intolerance*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1988, pp. 45, 67-68, 117.
- 16 H. Brookes to M. H. Ellis, 29 March 1920, Brookes papers, NLA MS 1924/1/6219.
- 17 See, for example Ellis's diatribes during the 1925 seamen's strike in the *Daily Telegraph*: 10, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24 October; 3, 7, 13 November 1925.
- 18 M.H. Ellis to managing director, Angus & Robertson, 12 August 1932, Angus & Robertson papers, ML MSS 314/29.
- 19 Agreement with Edward Telford Simpson, 24 May 1932, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21888.
- 20 M.H. Ellis to D.M. Cleland, 24 August 1949, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21889.
- 21 Cited in Russel Ward, *A Radical Life*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1988, p.214.
- 22 See, for example, 'Communism and the Unions', *Bulletin*, 10 May 1950; 'World Communism's Dividends', *Bulletin*, 16 September 1953; 'Defence and the Cold War', *Bulletin*, 21 March 1956.
- 23 M.H. Ellis, 'Rum Rebellion Reviewed', *Quadrant*, 2, 1, Summer 1957-58, pp 13-23.
- 24 cf. Andrew Moore, 'The "Historical Expert": M.H. Ellis and the historiography of the Cold War', *Australian Historical Studies*, forthcoming.
- 25 For discussion of Ellis's complicated relations with Clark see, Andrew Moore "History Without Facts": M.H. Ellis, Manning Clark and the Origins of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, forthcoming.
- 26 An envelope of correspondence with Cameron is at Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 27 M.H. Ellis to R.R. McKellar, 21 November 1947, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883; 'Records of Activities anti-Bank Nationalisation Campaign-16 August 1947 to 10 December 1947', Westpac Group Archives/A2057/49. For advice about relevant records in the Westpac Group Archives I am indebted to Dr Warwick Eather and Peter Henderson.
- 28 Rastrick, 'The Victorian Royal Commission', pp. 116, 128-132
- 29 *Tribune*, 15 February 1945; 2 July 1949.
- 30 Australian Archives (AA), CRS A6202 'Exhibit J'.
- 31 M.H. Ellis to (indecipherable), 24 May 1954, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21890.
- 32 AA, CRS A6126 item 26.
- 33 *Ibid.* Access to this file followed a Freedom of Information request in 1997.
- 34 'Record of M.H. Ellis', Ellis papers, ML MSS K21882.
- 35 Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots. A Study of Intolerance*, UQP, St Lucia, 1988, p.67.
- 36 AA, B197/0 item 2021/1/270: 'The Real Facts Concerning Hon. T.J. Ryan-Premier of Queensland-Aus.'. While this document was unsigned, its entry on Tom Barker makes reference to 'My "Handbook for Nationalists"'.  
37 David McKnight, *Australian Spies and their Secrets*, Allen & Unwin, 1994, pp. 28, p. 304n.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 28; information from David McKnight, 14 May 1999.
- 39 Ellis papers, ML MSS K21888.
- 40 Ellis believed the pamphlet's provenance lay with the IWW. Associate Professor Verity Burgmann is less certain, reporting that the first reference to *The Diesel Motor* in the IWW reading list was in *Direct Action* on 15 February 1915. (Email from V. Burgmann, 20 May 1999).
- 41 Ellis papers, ML MSS K21888, K21891.
- 42 See, for example, R.G. Casey to M.H. Ellis, 8 December 1953, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 43 Ellis papers, ML MSS K21890.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 A.G. Cameron to M.H. Ellis, 17 April 1954, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 46 A.G. Cameron to M.H. Ellis, 4 July 1954, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 47 A.G. Cameron to M.H. Ellis, 22 September 1954, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 48 K. Tennant, *Evatt: Politics & Justice*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1972, p. 380.
- 49 M.H. Ellis to C.H. Currey, 1 May 1954, ML MSS K21883
- 50 R. Philp to M.H. Ellis, 6 October 1955, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883
- 51 A. Birse to M.H. Ellis, 1 October 1955, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883
- 52 Doyle's connections with the Old Guard are documented in ML MSS 4477X. Doyle's connections with the Call did not escape the eagle eye of the renegade intelligence agent, R.F.B. Wake. See 'Phil's Friend' letters, H.V. Evatt papers, Flinders University of South Australia Library.
- 53 A. Doyle to M.H. Ellis, 5 January 1956, Ellis papers, K21882.
- 54 W.R. Hodgson to M.H. Ellis, 22 May 1950, ML MSS K21883. For information on Hodgson I am grateful to John Ruffels.
- 55 Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 56 AA, CRS A367 item C94121.
- 57 E.H. Harrison to M.H. Ellis, 30 December 1949, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21888.
- 58 D.K. Picken to M.H. Ellis, 8 October 1918, Ellis papers, ML MSS K21883.
- 59 AA, A432/80 item 48/470.